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SUBJECT: PRT LASHKAR GAH, HELMAND PROVINCE: GOVERNOR MANGAL TAKES  
CHARGE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Governor Mangal's first two months in Helmand have been productive, building solid support for his administration. His public outreach efforts are excellent, and he continues to meet regularly with residents of Lashkar Gah and the tribal and civil leadership of Helmand. Mangal has an impressive understanding of government operations and is pushing his provincial ministry directors to improve their planning and implementation capacity and to take charge of reconstruction and development efforts. He has an effective working relationship with the British-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), and Afghan security forces have responded well to his leadership. During a May 24 dinner, which included senior Afghan government officials, visiting British Secretary of State for Defense Des Browne registered HMG's strong support for the Helmand governor. Mangal's experience and determination to improve Helmand's provincial government sends a strong signal to area residents that the Afghan government can be effective.

¶2. (SBU) Upon his arrival in Helmand, Governor Mangal immediately focused on improving the performance of the provincial government. He has pushed provincial ministry directors to improve their operations and is personally reviewing the capacity of each director. Mangal chaired his first Helmand Provincial Development Committee on May 20 and was not pleased with the directors' reports. He told the directors to coordinate all government, NGO and international development activities within their areas of responsibility. The fight against corruption is a primary goal of his administration; he called for their support in eliminating it. Mangal told PRT officers that some local officials enjoy political or family connections and their removal from office will be difficult; however, with sufficient proof of non-performance, changes can be made in Helmand's provincial government.

¶3. (SBU) Public outreach is a key part of Mangal's efforts to bring the government closer to the people. He makes a point of traveling around Lashkar Gah and makes regular visits to the city bazaars to speak with the merchants and shoppers. In conjunction with the Ministry of Information and Culture, he organized a Public Poetry Festival in Lashkar Gah on May 15. The event took place at the women's park with several thousand people in attendance. Mangal delivered the opening address and called upon the audience to help promote a better image of Helmand, and to work with him to attract business, visitors and investments to the province. Residents were pleased by this effort and Mangal's support among the populace is growing.

¶4. (SBU) Mangal has established an effective relationship with the

PRT, which has provided him with expanded internet service, computers and office furniture to improve his office's capacity. Mangal told the PRT additional investment in government infrastructure is required in Lashkar Gah and the District Centers to reestablish the government across Helmand. His relationship with the security leadership is good, and he participates in weekly security briefings from Afghan and UK security forces. He occasionally maintains longer office hours to meet additional guests and build better ties across the province.

15. (SBU) Mangal's first two months in Helmand have been impressive. The provincial government is coming to life and he is pushing ministry directors to produce results. Residents of Lashkar Gah readily express support for Mangal and his efforts and have high hopes he can continue to improve the functions of Helmand's government.

WOOD